



WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF
Natural Resources
Doug Sutherland - Commissioner of Public Lands

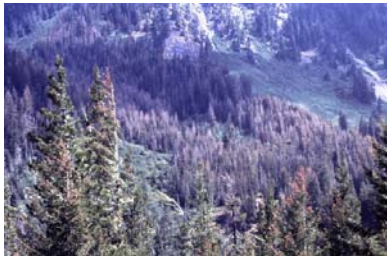
DNR Resource Protection Program 2005 Summary



Considering the nickname of “the Evergreen State,” it is no surprise that trees and forests are valued in Washington.

The Resource Protection Division of the Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) houses several programs delivered through DNR’s regional organization that work together to enhance the health of Washington Forests:

- **Forest Health** provides education and technical assistance on forest insects and diseases.
- **Wildfire Prevention** delivers public education on the role of individuals/organizations and provides local fire district assistance.
- **Landowner Assistance** delivers technical and financial assistance to communities and landowners, both urban and rural, to keep forests productive and to understand the connections between trees, forest and daily lives.
- **Wildfire Preparedness** provides training and other pre-suppression efforts to ensure safe and cost effective suppression actions.
- **Wildfire Suppression** delivers the actual suppression of wildfire on 12.7 million acres of state, private and tribal lands.



Each of these programs fills a separate role, but their work is connected, because fire and forest health are connected.



The 2005 accomplishments of these programs reflect that connection and the changing conditions that affect forest health and fire in Washington State.

Protecting forest health includes reducing risk and responding to threats of many kinds and in many ways. Photos, top to bottom:

- Bears stripping bark from young trees can kill whole plantations. Bear damage and root disease have killed trees on 233,000 acres, mostly in Western Washington.
- Western spruce budworm has increased dramatically along the eastern slope of the Cascade Range (note the rusty areas).
- Workshops can give landowners and community members information along with hands-on experience.
- Wildfire is a fact of life of Washington. Projects to increase prevention and firefighting capability, reduce hazardous fuels and restore fire-adapted ecosystems help reduce risks of catastrophic fire.

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2005 Program Accomplishments

In a year with fire danger well above average, many types of fires were at the lowest levels in 30 years.

Forest Health

- Granted over \$2.6 million to forest landowners for bark beetle prevention and restoration activities.
- Identified about 2.5 million acres of forestland with elevated levels of tree mortality, defoliation or foliar disease.
- Recorded about 7.3 million trees as recently killed, up from 1.8 million in 2002.

Wildfire Prevention

- Developed an extensive wildfire awareness campaign used by local governments and non-governmental partners.
- Deployed Fire Prevention Teams during high fire danger.
- Secured \$1.75 million in grants for cost-share fuel reduction programs.
- Awarded nearly \$800,000 in grants to 168 rural fire districts to refurbish 23 wildland fire engines, purchase equipment and train volunteer firefighters.
- Collaborated with communities and fire districts to develop 21 Community Wildfire Protection Plans.

Landowner Assistance

- Provided technical advice to 2,279 forest landowners.
- Provided technical assistance to 155 cities and towns as part of the Urban and Community Forestry Program.
- Added 5 new communities to the Firewise Communities USA program.

Wildfire Preparedness

- Increased capabilities for rapid initial attack used to reduce large costly fires.
- Kept 93 percent of all wildfires on DNR-protected lands to less than ten acres.
- Trained hundreds of individuals on basic and advanced wildfire pre-suppression and suppression activities;
- Reduced suppression costs on all large fires by the use of contractors and inter-agency resources.
- Trained and supervised 55 ten-person inmate fire crews.

Wildfire Suppression

- No serious firefighter injuries or fatalities.
- Responded to 1,200 reports of wildfire — 645 required suppression action, resulting in about 35,800 acres burned, less than 0.3 percent of DNR-protected acres.
- Integrated cost-containment strategies on all fires, particularly the 11 largest fires that cost the DNR an estimated \$15 million.

Summary of Key Goals

- *Avoid threats to human life, public safety and resources.*
- *Work with planning and educational efforts to promote forest health, fire-safe neighborhoods and protection of the working forest.*
- *Support forest management actions that appropriately reduce fuel loading and/or restore or mimic natural disturbances.*
- *Avoid expensive restoration treatments on sites degraded by intense fires; and*
- *Reduce cost of large fires.*

Among the forty DNR wildfires that grew beyond 10 acres, 11 grew larger than 100 acres, required elite incident management teams, and commitment of large quantities of fire suppression resources. These 11 fires burned 80,000 acres of federal, state and local jurisdictions at a cost to all agencies of about \$36 million.

2005 – Large Wildland Fires in Washington

Acres and costs include DNR and other state, federal and local jurisdictions.

Start Date	Fire Name	County	Acres	Est. Total Cost \$ in millions
7/3/05	Pearrygin Lake	Okanogan	530	1.0
7/4/05	Second HUDS	Okanogan	4,274	2.0
7/12/05	West Omak Lake	Okanogan	11,325	2.0
7/24/05	Wood Gulch	Klickitat	5,400	0.5
7/31/05	Dirty Face	Chelan	1,150	6.7
8/4/05	Lick Creek	Kittitas	735	2.9
8/5/05	School	Columbia, Garfield	52,000	15.1
8/7/05	Burnt Bread	Okanogan	1,356	2.0
8/10/05	Harker Canyon	Lincoln	1,566	1.0
9/8/05	Squaw Creek	Okanogan	1,100	1.0
9/28/05	Martin Road	Stevens	890	0.9

Challenges for the Future

- Extreme fire behavior associated with forest health and climate change increases costs and risk to the public and to firefighters.
- Create an understanding of how investments in forest health can reduce suppression and other costs for both the public and landowners.
- Achieve funding for the 10 recommendations in the Forest Health Work Group 2004 report.
- Reduce risks to personal and community safety due to 600,000 new homes in Washington over the next 15 years.
- Stabilize federal funding for landowner assistance and other programs.
- Changing federal performance and safety standards that will further compress the very limited number of people qualified to participate in incident management teams.
- Defining the “best mix” of contracted, state, federal or other resources necessary for effective and efficient wildfire suppression.

Converging Forces

Washington’s residents value its 22 million acres of forests in many ways—as a source of wood, jobs and income; as habitat and aids to clean air and water; as places to live and recreate; and as sources of beauty and inspiration.

Forest-related issues are emerging as human factors meet natural forces affecting the state’s forests—changing weather patterns, a growing population with urban values, and expansion of development into the forest zone. These converging forces affect fire risk, fire suppression strategies, and forest health.

Forest health and fires are closely connected, and a forest’s ability to withstand stresses such as drought, fire, insects and diseases is directly affected by complex interactions of many factors.

Wildfire is part of Washington’s cultural and natural history, but risks to landowners, communities and firefighters have increased and are expected to continue that trend.

Planning for Change

There are economic, ecological and social risks associated with wildfire. There are also broad public policy questions about the costs and effectiveness of the current wildfire suppression efforts.

In 2005, to answer these and other policy questions, Commissioner of Public Lands Doug Sutherland directed the DNR Resource Protection Division to develop a Strategic Plan for the DNR Fire Program.

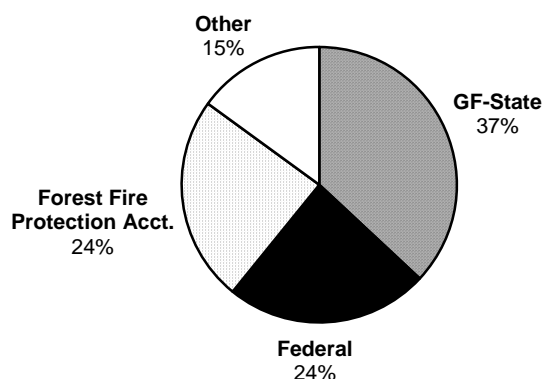
DNR has been working with an External Advisory Committee to prepare the plan, and expects it to be completed by May 2006.

Resource Protection Funding

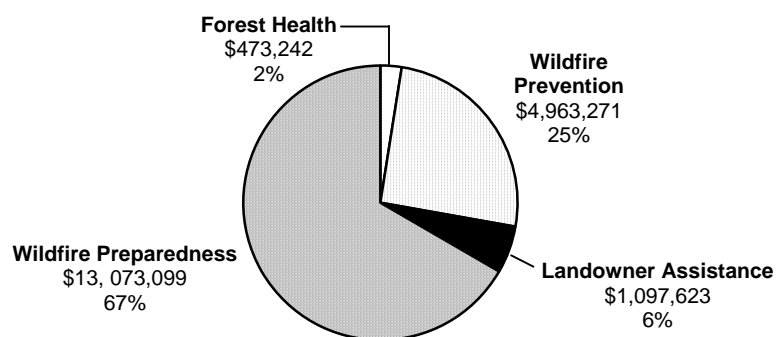
There are four major funding sources for the DNR Resource Protection Programs, excluding the Wildfire Suppression program. See the first pie chart, below.

In Fiscal Year 2005, federal funding increased by over \$2 million (about 90 percent) in real 2005 dollars, compared to 2001. Long-term reliance on federal funding is of concern, because federal funding is likely to decline due to changing federal budget priorities, and most of the increase was in grants to direct on-the-ground activities; core program elements were largely reduced.

**FY 2005 Resource Protection Program
Expenditures by Fund**
Without Wildfire Suppression



FY 2005 Distribution of Expenditures by Program
Without Wildfire Suppression



Accountability

Financial decisions are based on actions that result in the lowest net costs to the taxpayers and the landowners:

- **Applying lowest net cost approaches** that achieve all policy objectives;
- **Working collaboratively** to reduce fuel loading through economically viable utilization of forest materials.
- **Optimizing allocation of available funding** through inter-governmental, landowner and community coordination;
- **Investigating all fires and pursue cost recovery** for all negligent fires;
- **Incorporating a cost containment culture** in decision making on large fires; and
- **Reducing suppression costs and resource loss** by making wise spending decisions.

More Information — www.dnr.wa.gov

- **Fire Suppression Study, Report 05-11, Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee:** www1.leg.wa.gov/reports/05-11.pdf
- **Desirable Forest Health Program:** www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/rp/forhealth/fhswgc/foresthealthreport.pdf
- **2020 Strategic Plan for Wildfire Protection:** www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/rp/fire_strategic_plan/index.html
- **All Resource Protection Programs:** www.dnr.wa.gov/htdocs/rp/rp.html